

Board of Education Special Meeting
June 25, 2015

Call to Order

Board Chair Gee called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. in the Central Office Conference Room. Present: Board members Natalie Semyanko, Jeanne Gee, Susi Keane, Matt Service, John Richter, Lori D'Ostuni, Karen Berasi, Superintendent of Schools elect.

Executive Session

Matt Service moved, Susi Keane seconded to go into executive session at 6:34 p.m. for the purpose of discussing personnel matters.

Susi Keane moved, Matt Service seconded to come out of executive session at 6:36 p.m.

Regular Session

Board Chair Gee called the regular session to order at 6:37 p.m. in the Central Office Conference Room. Present: Board members Natalie Semyanko, Jeanne Gee, Susi Keane, Matt Service (left at 6:09 p.m.), John Richter, Lori D'Ostuni, Karen Berasi, Superintendent of Schools elect.

Discussion/Action Items

- Discussion and Potential Approval of an Unpaid, One-year Leave of Absence for a Faculty Member (2015-2016 School Year)
Board members reviewed precedence and contract language around leave of absence for teachers.
MOTION #15-44: Service moved, Richter seconded to grant Christine S. Hoffacker a one year, unpaid leave of absence, contingent upon successfully filling the position and requiring notification to the Board by March 15, 2016 on Ms. Hoffacker returning to Suffield Public Schools. The vote was unanimous.
- Potential Action on Administrative Structure
Karen Berasi, Superintendent elect, presented a change to the district administrative structure to provide more focus and traction to the areas of Special Education and Curriculum and Instruction. Specifically, separating the Assistant Superintendent role from including both Curriculum and Special Services oversight to creating two positions (1) Director of Special Services and (2) Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. In answer to Board member questions Ms. Berasi explained the previous structure (combining the curriculum and special services), while a compelling theory, does not work well in practice and is too much for a single administrator to manage with the depth and care needed. Building administrators have been consulted and recognize there are pressing needs in these areas and are supportive of this structure change to address them. Board member Beiter, who could not attend the meeting, sent remarks in favor of separating the current position of Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning into two positions citing the one position was a pretty impossible job, with most of current stress on the system in those two areas.

MOTION #15-45: Richter moved, Semyanko seconded to approve to separate Curriculum and Instruction from Special Education by breaking the Assistant Superintendent's position into two roles. The motion was approved 5-0-1 with the abstention from Board member Sepko who stated he supported the concept but did not have enough background.

MOTION #15-46: D'Ostuni moved, Semyanko seconded to approve the positions of Director of Special Services and K-8 Special Education Supervisor. The motion was approved 5-0-1 with the abstention from Board member Sepko who stated he supported the concept but did not have enough background.

Board Chair Gee asked Superintendent Elect Berasi to explain her reasoning behind the Assistant Superintendent position. Ms. Berasi outlined that the responsibilities included with curriculum and instruction have increased greatly over the last five years with mandates of the Common Core and the new Seed Model of teacher evaluation. Compliance alone was an enormous undertaking. Further, it allows another administrator in district who will not be in the SAG union and, with a modest salary increase over the high school principal salary, we will be able to attract very good, talented administrators to Suffield. Other salary changes would be placing the Director of Special Services' salary on the level of a middle school principal. Board member Beiter sent a message stating he was in favor of a Director of Curriculum and Instruction over an Assistant Superintendent due to the size of our district. Board member Gee thanked Ms. Berasi for the thoughtful documents she prepared outlining the new job descriptions and noted these would allow this meeting to serve as a personnel committee for approval of the job descriptions per our current policy and, if approved, we could post immediately.

Administrator Change:

2014-2015

Asst. Superintendent of Teaching and Learning

PreK-5 Special Education Supervisor

6-12 Special Education Supervisor

2015-2016

Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction

Director of Special Education

K-8 Special Education Supervisor

MOTION #15-47: Keane moved, Semyanko seconded to approve an Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, including modification of salary variances. The vote was unanimous.

Board Chair Gee asked if there was any public comment on tonight's agenda items.

Public Comment:

Kendra Wiesel, 37 Willow Creek – Ms. Wiesel stated she wasn't sure how the CREC Report played into the changes tonight.

Sue Davis, 42 Wisteria Lane – Ms. Davis stated her concern about Special Education, there were those in the system getting left behind, and that tonight there was no mention of the CREC Report.

Kim Worthington, 21 Clay Creek Drive – Ms. Worthington stated as a parent of a special education student she was concerned the CREC Report was not brought up in the discussion tonight, we are not meeting the needs of special education kids and what are we doing going forward.

Superintendent elect Berasi stated she has looked at the CREC Report deeply. She stated its worth in helping us to improve services to kids with special needs. Tonight's discussion was about the structure. She does not believe the structure was serving our kids; noting it didn't bring about the improvements anticipated and shared she had been in discussions with the previous Superintendent who agrees with that assessment. She believed the Assistant Superintendent position was not viable for anyone to do well. In addition, she stated we are going to improve both special education and general education through alignment and programmatically. She is spending time understanding accommodations and how paraprofessionals are used in the district, and with adding a Director of Special Education, we will get further faster.

Adjournment

Semyanko moved, Richter seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

Minutes are subject to approval at the next board meeting on July 21, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni
Secretary